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ABSTRACT

A program of research into higher education in Sweden is described. Focal areas of the research program are as follows: the role of higher education in society, the organization of higher education, the research function, and the educational function. Over 90 projects have been undertaken in 12 disciplines in the social sciences and humanities. The development of the program is illustrated in two tables, one showing how resources have been distributed between the problem areas, and another illustrating the shifts in the involvement of the various disciplines. The tables include a general prediction for 1984-1989. It is noted that studies on the effects of higher education in the early 1970s focused on measures of efficiency and productivity, while 10 years later concept formation of students is the focus of interest. In addition to issues presently studied (e.g., research environment and research organization), the following broad issues will also be given special priority: the organization of higher education and the content of research and teaching; knowledge, education, and the division of labor in society; and higher education and cultural life. A list of 24 ideas papers on research into higher education is appended. (SW)

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RESEARCH ON HIGHER EDUCATION

LONG TERM DEVELOPMENT OF KNOWLEDGE *

The Swedish National Board of Universities and Colleges, and its predecessor, have now for more than a decade continuously supported the build-up of Swedish research into higher education and its function in society. This work has been conducted as a special program, whose steering forms assure that the selection of researchers and research ventures is influenced both by research criteria and by practitioners' assessments of relevance.

In this research program four main problem areas are studied, viz. the role of higher education in society, the organization of higher education, the conditions and potentialities of research and of education. Problems in all these areas are studied in a multi-disciplinary way and analyzed at the structural level as well as at the process level, and at the level of individuals. So far, within the four areas, over 90 projects have been launched in 12 disciplines in the social sciences and humanities, and about 30 conferences and problem area meetings have been arranged.

The research program has attempted, and to a certain extent also managed, to build up a Swedish research community centred around its field of interest. A

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number of research teams are supported for extended periods of time and through several consecutive projects, and there are frequent and regular contacts between researchers from the various disciplines. Furthermore, Swedish research on higher education is integrated into an international research community, in a way which is stimulating and a guarantee for quality control. Thus, in June 1983 the research program will hold its third international conference, this time on the theme "Studies of Higher Education and Research Organization".

The development of the program is illustrated in two tables, one showing how resources have been distributed between the problem areas (Table 1), and another illustrating correspondingly the shifts in the involvement of the various disciplines (Table 2). The tables also include a very general an uncertain prediction for the period 1984-1989. This prediction is based on judgements made by the program's advisory groups who in 1982 have had two meetings, one in the Spring and one in the Autumn, in order to consider in which directions the program should move in the next five year period. Idea papers written by about 30 of the researchers and practitioners belonging to the program's nearest interest groups were used as a background for one of those meetings (papers listed in Appendix). We are coming back to these assessments when concluding this section.

Table 1. Research on higher education
Inputs by areas 1971-82.

Problem areas	Percentage of grants(%) 1971-74	1975-78	1979-82	Prediction for 1984-89
The role of higher education in society	33	33	38	30
The organization of higher education	16	28	30	30
The research function	2	21	19	25
The educational function	43	18	13	15
TOTAL	100	100	100	100

Table 2. Research on higher education
Inputs by disciplines 1971-82.

Disciplines	Percentage of grants(%) 1971-74	1975-78	1979-82	Prediction for 1984-89
Philosophy, history, history of ideas, theory of science	2	18	22	30
Business economics, economics, economic history, geography	9	16	-	-
Education, psychology	70	39	52	35
Sociology, anthropology	18	7	8	15
Political science	1	20	18	20
TOTAL	100	100	100	100

As already indicated, the aim of the research program is to analyze and increase our understanding of the basic issues of higher education. At the beginning of the 1970s studies of the effects of higher education typically dealt with certain outer measures of efficiency and productivity, while ten years later the concept formation of the students is the focus of interest, as is also the development of their attitudes and values concerning their prospective professions.

Questions of organization which were studied in the initial stage of the program's existence were concerned with outer circumstances such as localization, organization of the studies, administrative procedures, etc, while the organizational research today instead is concentrated on the inner life of higher education as expressed for instance through the attitudes of the teachers and researchers towards their work and its conditions, through the knowledge traditions of various study programs, etc.

This deeper penetration of higher education issues has gradually broadened the purpose and extended the interest groups of the program. In the beginning, the program was seen as a part of the central decision-making organization of higher education, its task being to increase the knowledge of the outer frames of the higher education activities, which should and could be planned and controlled from the political level. This was probably a reasonable ambition for that period, but it is no longer adequate in the decentralized system introduced in 1977, where decisions about direction, content and forms of activities are now taken in the various higher education institutions. It is, therefore, now necessary that the research program serves all higher education interests more openly and independently, by contributing towards more coherent and, at the same time, deeper knowledge concerning the tasks of higher education, its internal life and its function in society.

Given this more general purpose, it is also natural that the research program should work in a multi-disciplinary way. The program should give a multitude of perspectives. The types of study to be included, and the disciplines to take part, are just as important a consideration as the questions and fields to be studied. Research must illuminate higher education from all sides, so that it can be understood and treated

not only as an educational or a research system, but also, for example, as a political system and - not least important - as a cultural phenomenon, and in a historical perspective. Such research on the realities of Swedish higher education should also increasingly rely on international comparisons.

The NBUC expects that the research program will continue its work to analyze basic issues of higher education in the four problem areas mentioned above. Some of the issues presently studied, e.g. research environment and research organization or knowledge traditions of educational programs, will continue to be central in the research efforts. In addition to that, and in accordance with the recommendations of the program's advisory groups, studies of the following broad issues will now also be given special priority:

a) the organization of higher education and the content of research and teaching,

b) knowledge, education and the division of labour in society, and

c) higher education and cultural life.

The NBUC is confident that the combined planning and searching process, including problem area meetings, seminars and advisory group meetings, that has been developed in this research program, will guarantee that these important issues will come into focus in the program during the second part of the 1980s.

Eskil Björklund
1982-12-03

SWEDISH NATIONAL BOARD OF
UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES
Research on higher education program

IDEA PAPERS ON RESEARCH INTO HIGHER EDUCATION

(collected in September-October 1982)

Discipline	No	Theme
Philosophy	1	The conditions of tacit knowledge (Sören Halldén) Conditions for creativity and the art of writing in higher education
Theory of Science	2	The utility of research (Göran Wallén)
History and History of Ideas	3	The demands of society and the contents of science (Tore Frängsmyr)
"	4	The organization of higher education and the contents of science (Sven-Eric Liedman, Ingemar Nilsson)
"	5	The role of higher education in cultural life (Gunnar Richardson)
"	6	Ideology and debate in higher education (Nils Runeby)
"	7	Knowledge, education and professional specialization (Rolf Torstendahl)
Education	8	The conditions for teaching and for teachers' professions (Donald Broady, Bo Lindensjö, Ulf Lundgren) Research in Planning, evaluation, follow-up
"	9	The development of tenured posts in higher education (Urban Dahllöf)
"	10	Long-range effects of higher education (Sigbrit Franke-Wikberg)
"	11	Teacher education and teachers' knowledge (Göran Linde)
"	12	Higher education and integration of knowledge (Stig Lindholm)
"	13	The content of higher education (Ference Marton, Lennart Svensson)

Discipline	No	Theme
Psychology	14	Study Motivation: prerequisites and effects (Lennart Sjöberg)
Sociology	15	Forms of expression in the public debate (Margareta Bertilsson)
"	16	Equality and higher education (Bengt Gesser)
"	17	The atomization of the social sciences (Joachim Israel)
"	18	Leadership at academic institutions (Lorentz Lyttkens) Limits for reforms of higher education Higher education and the carriers of culture The conditions for research in higher education
"	19	Pradigms in research on higher education (Lennart G Svensson) What do the professionals do in higher education? Who constructs the content of higher education programs?
Political Science	20	Research on higher education. Community and competence (Rune Premfors, Björn Wittrock)
Others	21	The effects of the sectorization of higher education (Olof Eriksson) Research and Industrial Renewal
"	22	Teachers and Students in higher education of today (Inge Jonsson)
"	23	What is a favourable research environment? (Mac Murray) Utilization of research in political decision-making To anticipate educational demand
"	24	The work forms of the Research Councils (Nils-Eric Svensson) The researcher's everyday situation What is a favourable research environment?